

**FRIENDS OF THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)
c/o National WIC Association**

December 4, 2019

The Honorable David Trone
United States House of Representatives
1213 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable G.T. Thompson
United States House of Representatives
400 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ann McLane Kuster
United States House of Representatives
320 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
United States House of Representatives
2434 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Trone, Representative Thompson, Representative Kuster, and Representative Guthrie:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our support for the Supporting Healthy Outcomes for Mothers and Infants Act. This bipartisan legislation is an important step forward in addressing the unique nutritional needs of families affected by opioid use. This bill's targeted investments will strengthen existing work by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to ensure tailored support to pregnant and postpartum women grappling with opioid use and infants diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

The opioid epidemic is a public health emergency resulting in nearly 50,000 deaths each year.¹ Opioid use can have a significant impact on pregnancy and birth outcomes, an increasingly pressing concern as the number of women giving birth with opioid use disorder has more than quadrupled from 1999 and 2014.² Each year, WIC serves approximately 6.9 million pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children up to the age of five.³ WIC serves as a crucial point-of-contact throughout pregnancy, and WIC agencies actively screen for symptoms of substance use and refer mothers who may be struggling with substance use disorder to appropriate services.

This legislation would build upon WIC's efforts by empowering clinic staff with additional nutrition education resources to counsel participants and caregivers. In particular, infants diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) benefit from specific nutrition interventions, including higher-calorie intake to improve digestive patterns. WIC designated NAS as a nutrition risk factor in 2017, but uniform materials issued by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services would enhance WIC's efforts to screen, treat, and support infants exhibiting symptoms of withdrawal.

We applaud your joint leadership in leveraging WIC's effective services to address this public health emergency.

Sincerely,

1,000 Days
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Coalition on Human Needs
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
Friends Committee on National Legislation
March of Dimes
MomsRising
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Counties
National WIC Association
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Nurse-Family Partnership
RESULTS
Share Our Strength
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
The Arc of the United States
Trust for America's Health
ZERO TO THREE

cc: Chairman Robert C. Scott
Ranking Member Virginia Foxx

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) Injury Prevention & Control: Drug Overdose Epidemic. <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/features/prescription-drug-overdose/index.html>.

² Haight S, Ko JY, Tong VT, Bohm M, Callaghan W (2018) Opioid Use Disorder Documented at Delivery Hospitalization – United States, 1999-2014. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 67(31), pg. 845-849. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6731a1.htm>.

³ United States Department of Agriculture (2018) WIC Participant and Program Characteristics 2016. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/WICPC2016.pdf>.